



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region One
490 North Meridian Rd.
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501
FAX: 406-257-0349
Ref:DV278-00
October 24, 2000

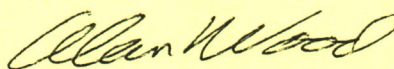
TO: Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena, 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Bldg., PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks: Director's Office – Rich Clough; Parks Division – Jeff Erickson, Allan Kuser; Fisheries Division – Karen Zackheim; Legal Unit; Lands – Darlene Edge; Wildlife – Fay Moore; Design & Construction – Dick Mayer
Montana Historical Society, SHPO, 225 North Roberts, Veteran's Memorial Bldg, Helena, 59620-1201
Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Ave., Helena, 59620-1800
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation, PO Box 728, Libby, 59923
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, PO Box 595, Helena, 59624
Montana State Parks Association, PO Box 699, Billings, 59103
Joe Gutkoski, Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18th, Bozeman, 59715
Rep. Rob Raney, 212 S. 6th, Livingston, 59047
Rep. Stanley Fisher, 76 Golf Terrace, Bigfork, 59911
Rep. Paul Sliter, PO Box 118, Somers, 59932
Sen. Bob Keenan, Box 697, Bigfork, 59911-0697
Flathead County Library, 247 First Avenue E, Kalispell, 59901
Flathead County Library, Bigfork Branch, PO Box 472, Bigfork, 59911
Flathead County Commissioners, 800 S Main, Kalispell, 59901
Flathead Wildlife, Inc., PO Box 4, Kalispell, 59903
Stan Frasier, MT Wildlife Federation, Box 1175, Helena, 59624
Arlene Montgomery, Friends of the Wild Swan, PO Box 5103, Swan Lake, 59911
Jim Mann, The Daily Inter Lake, PO Box 7610, Kalispell, 59904

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Swan River Corridor Land Acquisition and is submitted for your consideration. The objective is to have the Trust for Public Land, with the help of other Bigfork public interest groups, acquire approximately 480 acres of Scottish Power Company lands, located on the eastern edge of Bigfork, and deed it to FWP. The land will be managed for public recreational use.

Questions and comments will be accepted through November 23, 2000. Please direct your questions or comments to Marty Watkins, FWP Parks Manager, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901 or e-mail to mawatkins@state.mt.us.

Sincerely,


for Dan Vincent
Regional Supervisor

DV/nli
Enclosure

Flathead

Flathead Lake

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)
FOR THE SWAN RIVER CORRIDOR
ACQUISITION**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Proposed Action Description	1
Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action	2
Agencies with Jurisdiction and Those Consulted	5
Environmental Review	6
Alternatives Considered	16
Evaluation and Comments	17

APPENDIX

Area Map	Appendix A
Site Map	Appendix B

DRAFT

MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of Proposed State Action:** Acquisition of some Scottish Power Co. land in Bigfork, MT.
2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP),
490 N Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901. E-mail: mawatkins@state.mt.us.
3. **Name of Project:** Swan River Corridor Acquisition.
4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency):** Trust for Public Land,
P. O. Box 200, Helena, MT 59624. (406) 443-4017
5. **If Applicable:**

Estimated Acquisition/Commencement: Date: 2001
Estimated Completion: Date: 2004
Current Status of Project Design: (% complete) 0
6. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township):** Flathead County,
Sec. 31-32, T. 27 N., R. 19 W., and in Sec. 36, T. 27 N., R 20 W., M.P.M.
7. **Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

(a) Developed: residential ___ acres industrial..... ___ acres	(d) Floodplain..... ___ acres
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/ Recreation..... <u>475</u> acres	(e) Productive: irrigated cropland..... ___ acres dry cropland..... ___ acres forestry ___ acres rangeland ___ acres other ___ acres
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas <u>5</u> acres	
8. **Map/site plan:** attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

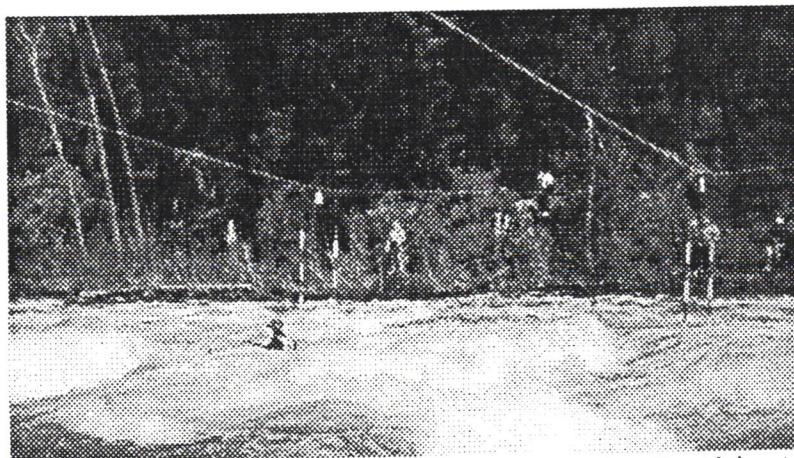
9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.

The objective is to have the "Trust for Public Land," with the help of other Bigfork public interest groups, acquire approximately 480 acres of Scottish Power Company (SPC) lands and deed it to FWP. The land will be managed for public recreational use. The area is located on the eastern edge of Bigfork, as shown in Appendix A, and is known as "Swan River Corridor."

A dam and electrical generating plant was constructed in early 1900 by Pacific Power & Light Company (PPL) for power production in Bigfork and the surrounding area. PPL merged into PacifiCorp in 1998. Since then, they have been rapidly liquidating all of their Montana properties considered to be nonessential to their electrical utility power operation.

PacifiCorp has recently entered into a purchase agreement with the Scottish Power Company, and they are in the process of acquiring a new license with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). New boundary lines for the FERC license application and the proposed land acquisition are shown on Appendix B.

The Trust for Public Land is currently negotiating with SPC to secure a purchase option on the land for a 3-year period. The funds to acquire the land will be solicited from a combination of public and private donors. The price of the land will be determined by an appraisal.



Kayaker going through the gates. (Photo by Worthington)

The Swan River Corridor property is located in Flathead County bordering on the east end of Bigfork where the Swan River flows into Flathead Lake. It is an irregularly shaped area fronting on both the north and south sides of the Swan River, totaling approximately 480 acres. River frontage on the north side is approximately 1 mile fronting on Bigfork Reservoir and one-half mile fronting on the Swan River. Frontage on the south side of the river is approximately one mile fronting on the reservoir and one mile fronting on the free-flowing Swan River. Montana State Highway 209 runs through the property parallel to the Swan River on the south side of the river for a distance of approximately two miles (Appendix B).

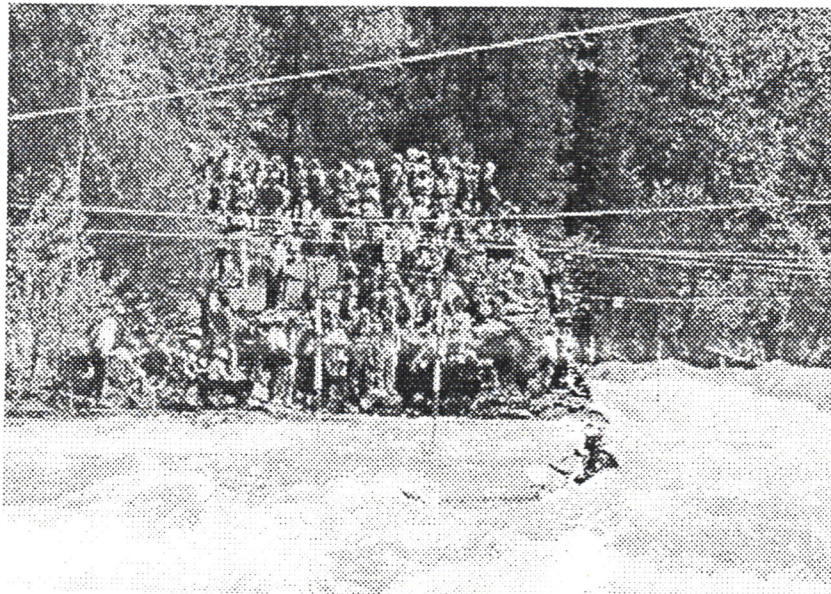
The area includes a diversion dam across the Swan River, located near the east end of the property, and a flume in Section 31, which feeds water to a hydro-electric generation facility on the eastern edge of Bigfork (Appendix B).

Except for one-half mile on the north side of the river, all lands abutting the river and reservoir are being retained by the utility company for their generation of electrical power under authority of their FERC license (Appendix B).

The Swan River Corridor is made all the more extraordinary because of its intimate linkage with the destination resort complex and cultural hub of Big Fork Village. The "Corridor" is also a vital natural link between Bigfork and the neighboring communities of Ferndale, Echo Lake, and Swan River, and used by the public for walking, running, hiking, horseback riding, and biking.

The land in the Swan River Corridor provides a full range of multi-use recreational activities. It is currently open to public access via the Swan River Nature Trail, an old county road that was closed in 1994 to motorized vehicle traffic. This two-mile trail provides access to Swan River and the forest directly to the east of Bigfork (Appendix B). Recreational activities, by local and area residents, and tourists from the USA as well as foreign countries, include walking, hiking, biking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and flora observation. River activities include fishing, rafting, and kayaking.

The Swan River Wild Mile Corridor is home to the Bigfork Whitewater Festival. The festival is a well-known national/international whitewater kayaking competition. The festival began over 20 years ago with only 10 participants. This past year, Bigfork played host to over 200 boaters as they tested their skills against the Class V rapids of the Swan River's famous "Wild Mile." The kayakers compete in several events: individual and team slaloms, a timed down-river race, and a free-style whitewater rodeo. The festival draws spectators from all over the United States and Canada.



Kayaker on the Swan River Wild Mile being watched by the many viewers during the Big Fork annual Whitewater Festival. (Photo by Worthington)



*Hiking along the Swan River Nature Trail.
(Photo by Bigfork Eagle)*

The area contains ospreys, bald eagles, numerous migratory songbird and woodpecker species, and other watchable wildlife. The area is primarily a riparian/mixed conifer woodland. Waterfowl is also abundant in the area, including Canada geese and numerous diving and dabbling duck species. This area is used on a transitory basis by large mammals, including white-tailed deer, black bears, and grizzly bears. The area provides a unique opportunity in that the occurrence of grizzly bears in the Bigfork area is a source of community pride and is probably related to the presence of the intact habitat in the Swan River Corridor.

The mile of Swan River between the Bigfork Dam and Flathead Lake is a popular year-round trout fishery. There are presently two main access points: the Electric Avenue Bridge in Bigfork and the Pacific Park river access off Highway 209. However, many anglers access this section via the Swan River Nature Trail. The Swan River Nature Trail provides many spur trails down to the river, allowing anglers to access more of the river. Within this river section, the fishing is good for rainbow and westslope cutthroat trout as well as an occasional lake trout. Rainbow trout can reach lengths of over 20 inches. Due to high gradient and large boulders, this stretch of stream provides good trout habitat with deep pools and runs. This reach of stream provides an important fishery since it is open to fishing all year, near urban Bigfork, and provides opportunities to all ages of anglers and types of fishing.

Sliter Park, adjacent to the river just below the power plant, houses a band stand where the summer Riverbend Concert Series is held. The park also provides picnic and playground facilities.

A landowner on the western edge of the Nature Trail is placing his land in a conservation easement, indicating the intense feeling the residents of Bigfork have for retaining this area in its natural condition.

10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
--------------------	---------------	---------------------

(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
--------------------	-----------------------

Trust for Public Land. Unknown at this time.

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
--------------------	-------------------------------

Flathead County Parks

Department.

Manages Slider Park

11. List of Agencies Consulted during Preparation of the EA:

Trust for Public lands

Bigfork Area Chamber of Commerce

Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- ⚙ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ▶ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ◆ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ◆◆ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
► a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
◆ e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		X				
f. Other _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):



Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)



Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.



Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
► a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
♦♦l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		X				
♦m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		X				
n. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- ☆ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				4e
♦♦f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4e. When the area becomes public land, recreational activities could increase, resulting in the possibility of more noxious weeds being transported into the area. If this occurs, the present FWP weed management plan and eradication program will have to be carried out.

- ⚙ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ▶ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

► 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
♦♦h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		X				
♦i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				
j. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

5b. If the land is not purchased for open space and recreation, its future may be subdivisions, which may have serious impacts to wildlife due to the interference of travel corridors and the introduction of domestic predators, which will have an impact on wildlife.

An extensive and professional marketing brochure was published for distribution by the owner of these lands, PacifiCorp, on August 20, 1999. It has been delivered to members of the Swan River Wild Mile Corridor Committee as well as interested developers. The real estate property manager for PacifiCorp visited Bigfork in the spring of 1999 to begin discussions with potential buyers, including the Corridor Committee.

The threat of sale to developers of the Swan River Wild Mile Corridor is as real and as imminent as the words imply. With a seller price tag now available to begin negotiations with buyers, the real estate game has begun in earnest.

An area north of the Wild Mile is already experiencing development as shown on Appendix B.

- ⚙ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed)

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. Retaining the land in its present condition will continue to keep viable the relationships between the surrounding communities, the retention of Big Fork as a major contributor to the natural scenery and cultural center, the continual retention of outstanding wildlife habitat, a natural and scenic area, and a most popular public use area in Northwest Montana in public ownership.



Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.



Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)



Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts. Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
♦d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				9b
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9b. The Swan River Trail and Slider Park currently serve as community meeting places for concerts and as people meet while recreating outdoors. The loss of this opportunity may impact the cohesiveness of the community.

- ☆ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u>	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: _____		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?			X		No	10b
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
► e. Define projected revenue sources		X				10e
► f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f
g. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10b. There will be a loss in tax revenue as no taxes are paid on state park lands.

10e. Funding for the maintenance of the site comes from a trust established for that purpose.

10f. Estimated cost is \$5,000 per year, which includes personnel, operation, and maintenance.



Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

◆ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

◆ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

◆◆ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				
e. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		X				
e. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- ⊗ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ◆ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ◆◆ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
♦f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		X				
♦♦g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):



Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)



Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.



Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no-action alternative) to the proposed action, whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider, and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative #1: FWP will hold title to the land through donation from the Trust for Public Land. Annual recreational operation and maintenance will be funded from a trust established for this purpose.

Alternative #2: FWP will hold title to the land. The area will be leased to a nonprofit group for recreational operation and maintenance for a minimal annual lease and funded from a trust established for this purpose.

Alternative #3: No action. Do not purchase the land. Public recreational opportunities would be lost.

Alternative #4: Due to limited funds, purchase a portion of the land with the funds available. This is a viable alternative; however, priorities for areas of land to be purchased would have to be established.

Preferred Alternative: Alternatives #1 or #2.

An alternative considered and dismissed was to have an individual, or group of people, purchase a conservation easement on the land and grant an easement for the Swan River Nature Trail. However, no interested buyers could be found.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

FWP will work with the local public agencies and groups to bring about the successful acquisition, planning, operation, and management of this outstanding recreational land.

4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? YES / NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

An EIS is not required as there are no significant environmental impacts for the preferred alternative.

5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project, if any; and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

Substantial community support has been generated. This proposal came from the Bigfork community's involvement and desire to see their trail corridor maintained. The dam relicensing process brought urgency and agency involvement.

A public meeting will be held if comments appear to support the need for it. If so, the date of the meeting will be published in the legal notices of the local newspapers. Copies of the EA will be available at the public libraries in Kalispell and Bigfork, and upon request to FWP.

6. Duration of comment period if any:

Thirty days – October 24 through November 23, 2000.

7. Name, title, address, and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Wayne B. Worthington, Consultant
Landscape Architect, ASLA
365 Summit Ridge Drive
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-2916
wworth@digisys.net

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

4e. When the area becomes public land, recreational activities could increase, resulting in the possibility of more noxious weeds being transported into the area. If this occurs, the present FWP weed management plan and eradication program will have to be carried out.

5b. If the land is not purchased for open space and recreation, its future may be subdivisions, which may have serious impacts to wildlife due to the interference of travel corridors and the introduction of domestic predators, which will have an impact on wildlife.

An extensive and professional marking brochure was published for distribution by the owner of these lands, PacifiCorp, on August 20, 1999. It has been delivered to members of the Swan River Wild Mild Corridor Committee as well as interested developers. The real estate property manager for PacifiCorp visited Bigfork in the spring of 1999 to begin discussions with potential buyers, including the Corridor Committee.

The threat of sale to developers of the Swan River Wild Mile Corridor is as real and as imminent as the words imply. With a seller price tag now available to begin negotiations with buyers, the real estate game has begun in earnest.

An area north of the Wild Mile is already experiencing development as shown on Appendix B.

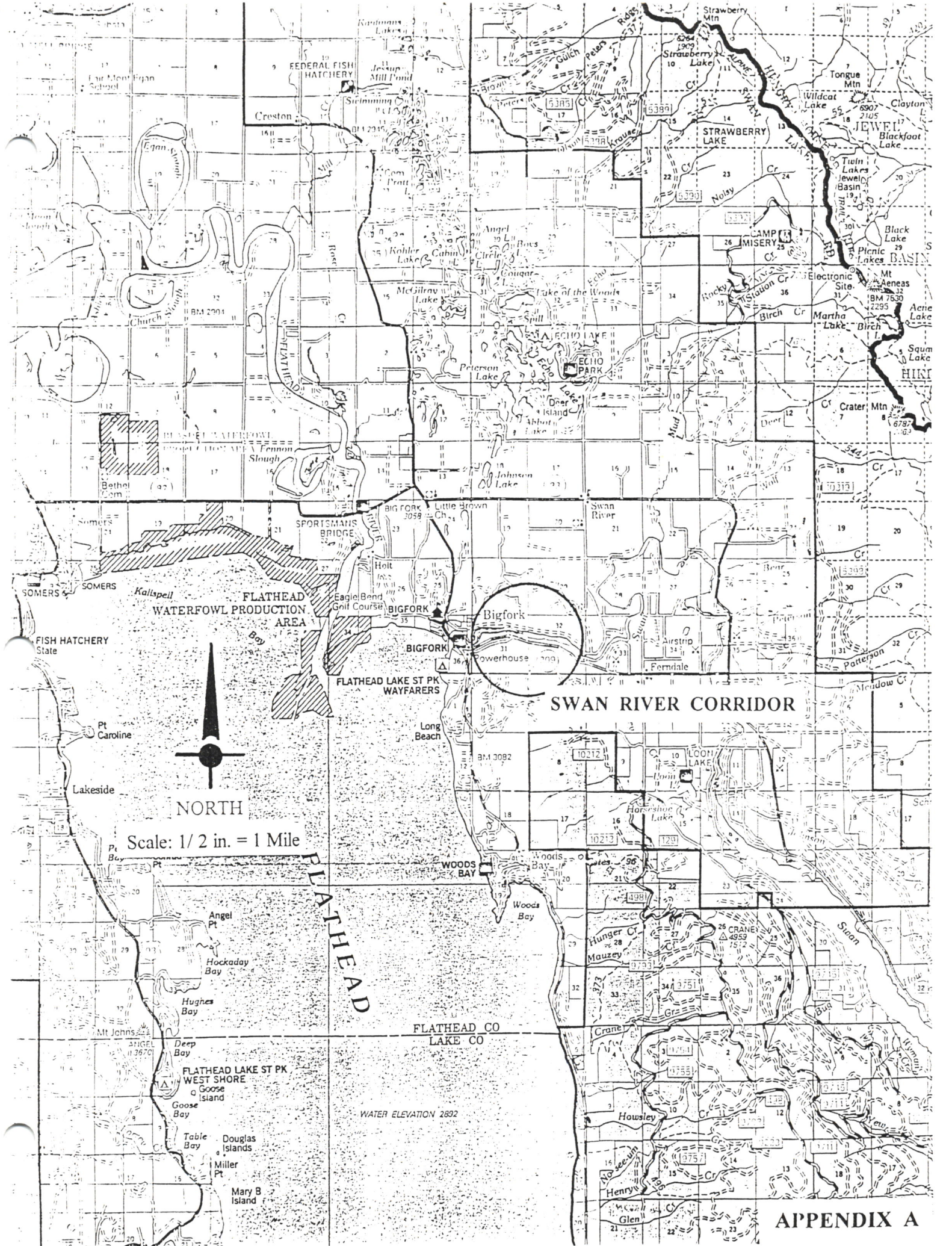
7a. Retaining the land in its present condition will continue to keep viable the relationships between the surrounding communities, the retention of Big Fork as a major contributor to the natural scenery and cultural center, the continual retention of outstanding wildlife habitat, a natural and scenic area, and a most popular public use area in Northwest Montana in public ownership.

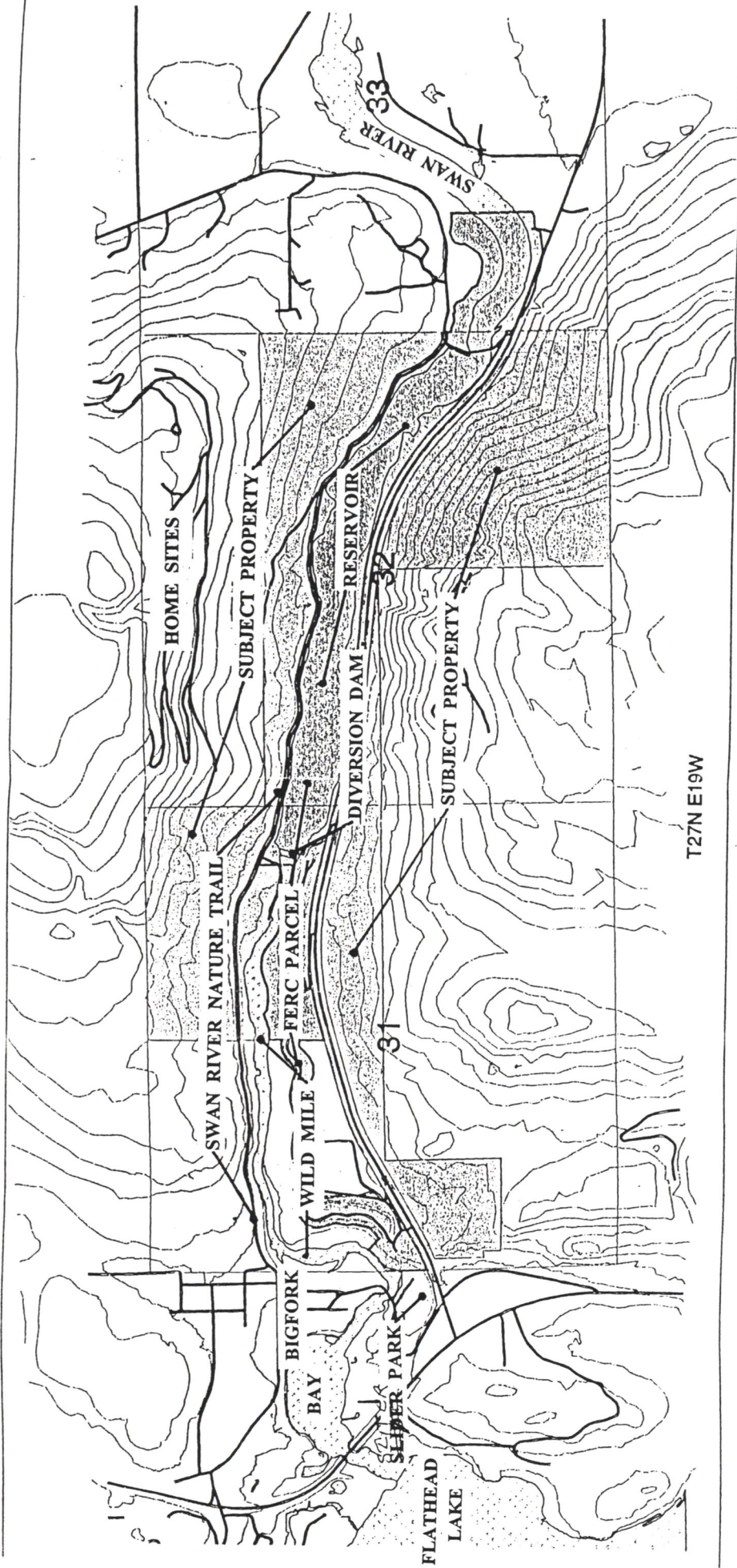
9b. The Swan River Trail and Slider Park currently serve as community meeting places for concerts and as people meet while recreating outdoors. The loss of this opportunity may impact the cohesiveness of the community.

10b. There will be a loss in tax revenue as no taxes are paid on state park lands.

10e. Funding for the maintenance of the site comes from a trust established for that purpose.

10f. Estimated cost is \$5,000 per year, which includes personnel, operation, and maintenance.





Legend

- North parcel
- Highway/River parcel
- FERC boundary parcel

- South parcel
- West/Commercial parcel
- PLS Section lines



Big Fork Hydroelectric Project

GIS PACIFICORP
Geographic Information System

North Arrow